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2                                   **SHORT STATEMENT**

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4                                   **OLIVIA GOLDEN, DIRECTOR**  
5                                   **CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AGENCY**  
6                                   **TO THE U.S HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE**  
7                                   **ON APPROPRIATIONS, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
8                                   **SUBCOMMITTEE, REGARDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF**  
9                                   **“DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA FAMILY**  
10                                   **COURT ACT OF 2001.”**

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12                                   **Wednesday, April 10, 2002**

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15                   Good afternoon, Chairman Knollenberg, Ranking Member Fattah, and Members  
16 of the Subcommittee on District of Columbia Appropriations. I am Olivia Golden, the  
17 Director of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) for the District of Columbia.

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19                   I am most appreciative of the opportunity to testify today on behalf of Mayor  
20 Williams and Deputy Mayor Carolyn Graham regarding the implementation of the  
21 “District of Columbia Family Court Act of 2001.” I would also like to thank  
22 Congressman Delay, Congresswoman Norton, and Senators Landrieu and DeWine for  
23 their leadership in the passage of the Family Court Act, as well as Chief Judge King and  
24 Presiding Judge Satterfield for their leadership in implementation.

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26                   This legislation is a key element of our reform strategy for the District of  
27 Columbia’s child welfare system and is critical to our success in protecting children’s  
28 safety, ensuring that children grow up in permanent families, and promoting the  
29 wellbeing of the District’s most vulnerable children. The Family Court Act is the last  
30 piece in structural reform that will dismantle institutional and legal barriers that once  
31 stood in the way of providing effective services to the District’s abused and neglected  
32 children.

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I am pleased to report that CFSA has been working closely with the Superior Court to provide input into the Family Court implementation plan and put the first steps toward reform into place as rapidly as possible. We greatly appreciate the Court's responsiveness.

Specifically, we would like to express appreciation for several broad themes of the Court's plan:

- The clear focus of the plan on children's safety and prompt movement towards permanence;
- The commitment to move immediately to a One Judge/One Family approach for all new abuse and neglect cases;
- The commitment to an ongoing and regular framework for consultation and joint decision-making with stakeholders;
- The commitment to promoting improved outcomes for children through teamwork among the judicial team, the attorneys and social workers who work with children, as well as through family engagement; and
- The understanding that achieving teamwork and better outcomes requires improved scheduling, and a sharp reduction in the number of judges that attorneys and social workers must appear before, and the development of mutual respect and trust across the team.

These commitments involve not only major and positive but also rapid change. This summer, the Court will ensure that for all new abuse and neglect cases, the same judge who hears the trial of a case will also hear the adoption or guardianship petitions, as well as every hearing in between, compared to past history where a child's case might have been heard by three or four judges. This change will promote a critical goal that Mayor Williams, the Congress, and the Superior Court all share: that children move swiftly to a permanent family. Achieving this goal will truly make a substantial difference to children's lives, and move the District towards compliance with the Adoptions and Safe Families Act (ASFA).

A second major change that will benefit children and that we hope the Court will be able to phase in rapidly is the commitment to reducing the number of judges hearing

65 abuse and neglect cases, in order to enable social workers and attorneys to work in teams  
66 with a limited number of well-trained and supported Family Court judges.

67 In my written testimony, I summarize the District's child welfare reform efforts,  
68 as these efforts complement those envisioned in the Family Court Act. I would be  
69 delighted to explain these accomplishments further during the question period. The key  
70 point is that in the ten months since the ending of the Federal Court receivership on June  
71 15, 2001, the pace of reform in the District's child welfare system has been dramatic. For  
72 example, in less than one year, the District has unified under CFSA the responsibility for  
73 abuse and neglect investigation and services, ending years of fragmentation, and the  
74 District has promulgated its first licensing requirements for foster homes, group homes,  
75 and independent living facilities.

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77 As we continue to build on these dramatic reforms in child welfare District-wide,  
78 I want to highlight one area where the continued support of this Committee and the  
79 Congress as a whole is particularly important to our success: the District is proposing,  
80 through the legislative vehicle of the FY2002 supplemental budget request, that Congress  
81 increase the Federal reimbursement rate for foster care and adoption under Title IV-E of  
82 the Social Security Act to 70% -- the same reimbursement rate as Medicaid. As you are  
83 aware, several years ago the Medicaid reimbursement rate was raised for the District in  
84 light of the unique demographics and needs of the city. This proposal would bring the  
85 Title IVE rate in line with the Medicaid rate, as in other jurisdictions.

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87 In conclusion, I look forward to continuing our work together on behalf of the  
88 District's vulnerable children.

89 Thank you, and I would be happy to answer any questions.  
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